

Baseball

A recent CDC News article describes the disappointment felt by Toronto Blue Jays fans who are visually impaired at losing radio broadcasts this year. Due to Covid travel restrictions, the Jays will now simulcast their television announcers over the AM/FM dial instead of using dedicated radio broadcasters. Unfortunately, baseball fans will no longer get the exceptionally detailed descriptions that radio announcers are so skilled at providing. "This move flies in the face of the Accessible Canada Act," said Jays fan Dean Steacey, who believed that the change creates one more barrier for fans who are blind.

Radio has historically been significant to both people who are visually impaired, and to the sport of baseball. A 1929 article describes an American Foundation for the Blind radio drive, which distributed 3,500 radios that year alone. People who were visually impaired could, through their radio, become part of significant shared experiences with thousands of other people. As Helen Keller said of radio, "All the world will crowd into the humble dwelling of our blind friends. The silent room will hum with live interests." Often times, one of those shared experiences was a baseball game. In his 2015 book *Crack of the Bat*, James Walker argues that baseball translates better to radio than any other sport. Its measured pace allows a listener to concentrate on every play. Baseball's action and layout are well organized and easy to visualize. The sport has its own vocabulary, allowing for concise yet descriptive narration. And baseball arguably has the most skilled announcers of any sport – even having their own place in the National Baseball Hall of Fame! Radio announcers can be so entertaining and descriptive that some people, like blind Rockies fans Peggy and Mark LoRusso, even listen to the radio while attending a game. The radio announcers are like friends and heroes to the LoRussos, and are the eyes that allow them to see a baseball game. The 100-year presence that baseball has maintained on the radio has also created generations of nostalgia and tradition on the airwaves. The sounds of the game never change, says Walker, even when technologies do.

Attending a game in-person is, of course, one of the most exhilarating things a baseball fan can do. In a 1934 article in *Baseball Magazine*, a blind Detroit Tigers fan named A.L. Floyd describes a game well enough to place the reader there. He can hear the yells of the vendors and the noises in the grand stand as he enters. He knows the players, sometimes personally, and knows their histories so well he can almost predict their plays. Reactions from the fans mix with the sounds of the field to give timing to the game. The umpire's calls determine the pitcher's skill, while a crack or thud signifies a hit or a strike. Even the sound of the grass could give Floyd cues as to when a grounder was hit. Jeers from the crowd describe a player's reputation, while cheers or moans explain their performance. All of these

sounds combine to illustrate a game every bit as thrilling and tense to Floyd as it was to the rest of the crowd . And almost 50 years later, famous blind musician Jose Feliciano described a similar experience in his article “Playing Baseball Lights My Fire.” Growing up in New York, he recalled that he could even tell the speed of the ball by the sound of the pitch itself. He was also especially excited to hear the jubilation of the crowd when he was in Philadelphia for game 6 of the 1980 World Series.

While discussing his experience as a fan, Jose Feliciano also brought up the importance of baseball announcers in his life. Although some announcers were terrible, he said, he loved announcers who gave an in-depth analysis, like Phil Rizzuto. With baseball announcers holding such an important place in the lives of fans who are visually impaired, it might not be surprising that some of those fans have become announcers themselves. Blind since birth, Bryce Weiler has announced games for the Peoria Chiefs, University of Illinois at Chicago, and has taken part in some St. Louis Cardinals radio broadcasts. In addition to announcing games, Weiler has a master’s degree in sports management, and served as an accessibility consultant for the Baltimore Orioles. Enrique Oliu, who has also been blind his entire life, has been the Spanish language radio announcer for the Tampa Bay Rays since their inaugural game in 1998. With no crowds during the 2020 season, Oliu said in a New York Times article, taking cues from the soundscape of the game became much more complicated. He can no longer use crowd reactions to judge the flow at the games. But he has been able to adapt to his announcing job by focusing more on sounds that are clearer than ever during the pandemic – the ball hitting the catcher’s glove, or the conversations in the dugouts, for example.

Telegrams

There are several different formats of document in the AFB , but one of the most interesting to me has been the large number of telegrams in the collection. Seeing so many different types and ages of telegrams made me think back to a time in the 1980s when my aunt sent me a telegram for my birthday. Getting the special message delivered by courier is something I’ll never forget. But it made me wonder what happened to a service that, though extremely popular at one time, is clearly outdated today.

Wired Magazine published an [article](#) about the history of the telegram upon the official end of its use in 2006. The first telegram was sent from Washington to Baltimore on May 26, 1844. Samuel Morse used his code to send a message to his partner Alfred Vail. It was the beginning of the end for the Pony Express. Several telegram companies consolidated to form Western Union in 1851. Western Union built the first transcontinental telegraph line in 1861, and

cemented its place as the primary company for telegram service. Telegrams reached their peak during the 1920s and 30s, when it actually cost less to send a telegram than it did to place a long distance phone call. This was in part due to telegraphs being decoded by an electronic receiver, rather than by hand.

Companies typically charged by the word, with a maximum of 10 or 15 allowed. Not completely unlike today's digital technology, there were both official and slang styles of "telegraphese" used to efficiently abbreviate words or characters into a telegram. The [Adams Cable Codex](#) and [The ABC universal commercial electric telegraphic code](#) are just two examples of codebooks for telegraph style. The word "Entice," for example, stands for the phrase "They are not entitled to it." The word "STOP," however, was used instead of using a period because it cost the sender less money. Punctuation cost extra, but the word "STOP" was free.

Countless telegraphs were used for daily communication. But there are historically significant telegrams such as the SOS sent from the RMS Titanic, or the notorious Zimmerman Telegram, which ushered in US involvement in World War One. The sight of a Western Union courier was dreaded during the World Wars because of the bad news it might bring. I remember, for example, seeing the telegram announcing that my uncle was missing in action in a family album. For some, the news was much worse.

As long distance phone rates dropped and telecommunication technologies advanced in the 1960s, Western Union began to slowly phase out couriers in favor of postal delivery. In 2005, a surprising 20,000 telegrams were sent for \$10 a message. Then, in January of 2006, several people rushed to be the last to send a Western Union telegram when the announcement was made that the service would be eliminated. There are still internet services that allow for a "telegram" to be delivered on paper, should you wish to send what is now a very unique message. In reality, though, these telegrams are essentially just printed letters delivered from a company via USPS, costing as much as \$30.

HELEN LIKES BEER

"Helen," she said superfluously, "does like beer." That about sums up Helen Keller...

It is not the kind of statement that one might be used to reading in print about Helen Keller. But some things may never change – the recent [conspiracy theory](#) about Helen Keller as either a fraud or non-existent being an extreme example . In an incredibly odd group of words that seems to

have passed for an article in 1955, Phyllis Battelle described her experience at Helen Keller's 75th birthday party. Actually, Battelle described the June event as a celebration of "75 years of usefulness."

LOVES WICKED STAGE

Helen Keller is not all optimism, the author infers while misspelling "Polyanna." Helen has no problem letting people know that she doesn't like them – especially if they are bigots, filled with self-pity, or just plain stupid. And Helen, Battelle seems to be saying, loves to hang out backstage with the wild and wicked theatre celebrities - ESPECIALLY if she can get away from her chaperone (wink-wink.) The only reason Helen doesn't smoke is *probably* because her vocal cords are so delicate because of her inability to speak on a regular basis. But, the article seems to insinuate, she sure does like to drink! In fact, Polly even had to hold back Helen's hand from grabbing a beer on her birthday, which Helen just went ahead and snuck anyway. Or, at least that's how Phyllis Battelle tried to present the 10-second event. Helen, it seems, is only as good as the company she keeps.

It paints an amusing picture. And as much fun as it might be to spend some time drinking beer with a militant anti-bigot, it is all too easy to see through to the author's desperation to find a juicy story about a person just trying to celebrate her birthday. Perhaps the best part of the article is a note added to the bottom in pencil, presumably by the collection's original archivist. Typically, these Archivist's notes might give some contextual information about an artifact. This one is much more personal - "Horrible!"

https://www.afb.org/HelenKellerArchive?a=d&d=A-HK01-05-B100-F14-022.1.1&e=-----en-20--1--txt--%22a+fly%22-----3-7-6-5-3-----0-1&utm_source=hootsuite&utm_medium=&utm_term=&utm_content=&utm_campaign=

Students

In 1933, Miss Elizabeth Aitkin sent Helen Keller a handful of letters from her 3rd and 4th Grade classes in Wrangell Public Schools, Alaska. Miss Aitkin writes that the sixteen letters were from "eager, busy people bending over their desks" to write Helen Keller. During Christmas time, the teacher had noticed that the children were so busy talking about what they wanted for Christmas that they had forgotten about the spirit of giving. Since the students had recently made 2 cents a copy selling a printing of their own writings , the class decided to send their earnings to Helen Keller.

Along with Miss Aitkin's handwritten letter in the folder were those from each of her students. Each of the letters is touching in its own way, often repeating what they have learned of Helen Keller in their My Weekly Reader, or asking if she has been to Alaska. It seems that the students raised a total of \$2.36 to donate to the "children in silent darkness." Their next endeavor, many students mention, will be to raise money to buy some books for their own library. One bluntly states "Next time we are going to buy some books because we need them."

Also included in the file were AFB Assistant Director Eber L. Palmer's responses to both the students and the teacher. With his thanks, he assures both the teacher and her students that Helen Keller will send an autographed photograph to hang in their classroom. The letters have been digitized at Internet Archive at https://archive.org/details/image-3_202104

A Voice From the Past

It was John Hitz, superintendent of Alexander Graham Bell's Volta Bureau, who introduced Helen Keller to the Swedenborgian "New Church" when she was still a student there. Hitz had been born in Switzerland and was an ardent Swedenborgian - a Christian denomination influenced by the writings of Swedish Lutheran Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772.) Hitz, who became a very close friend to Helen Keller, provided her with all of the braille books on the Swedenborgian religion that she could read. It was so important to her that in 1927, Helen spelled out her Swedenborgian beliefs to the world in a book called *My Religion*, later expanded and published as *Light in My Darkness*. Even in the Helen Keller Archive's collection of her braille books there are only 3 works: The Bible, New Testament, and *Heaven, It's Wonders, and Hell* by Emanuel Swedenborg.

The AFB Archive holds files going back to 1930 showing a strong relationship with the Swedenborg Foundation. In fact, Swedenborgian Talking Books were in the works in 1935 - the same year that the Talking Book program began. Interestingly, a 1974 file showed that AFB was later involved in recording a Talking Book version of *My Religion* for the Swedenborg foundation narrated by Lillian Gish, a movie star going back to the days of silent film. Gish and Keller were introduced to each other in Hollywood in 1918, when Helen was working on her first movie, *Deliverance*. They remained friends for life, and again spent time together in 1950, when Helen was back in Hollywood working on her second film, *Unconquered*.

I was surprised to find that the recording is still available from the Swedenborg Foundation on CD. I ordered the book, and it really was a voice from the past. There I sat in the Archive, listening to a book by Helen Keller, read by a friend and contemporary of hers, surrounded by materials

documenting both Helen Keller's life and the Talking Book's creation. It was an incredible connection to share, both with the world and with Helen Keller.

*Attached are a photo of a document regarding the recording of the Talking Book, and a photograph of original Helen Keller Archivist Marguerite Levine with Lillian Gish, standing in front of a portrait of Helen Keller that still hangs in the Archive here at APH. I don't think I have any photo editing program on this computer, but I thought these might to together side-by-side.

The Incredible Journey of a Barrell of Documents

The Incredible Journey of a Barrel of Documents... For me, it started just recently with two AFB Archive folders labeled "Royal Normal College." But for this manuscript, it was just the latest stop in a journey of over 100 years.

The first of the folders contained what looked like run-of-the-mill AFB memos, and the second had several bunches of legal-sized documents folded up so they could fit in a standard-sized folder. This seems to be commonly done with 1970s facsimiles in the AFB Archive, so I was not expecting what I found when I dug deeper. The heavy, folded papers were in fact a hand-written manuscript of the autobiography of Sir Francis Campbell, transcribed before his death in 1914. I checked the previous folder of memos to see if I could find any further background on the manuscript, and a 100-year journey of the manuscript of was laid out before me.

Beginning as a 12-year-old student in 1844, Sir Francis was teaching music at the Tennessee School for the Blind by the age of 18. After earning his bachelor's degree in mathematics, Sir Francis went on to teach at the Wisconsin School for the Blind, where he was almost lynched for his abolitionist views. He joined the staff of the Perkins School for the Blind after an 1857 visit, pioneering expanded core curriculum. And finally, Sir Francis helped establish the Royal Normal College in 1872, on what was supposed to be a sabbatical. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame for Leaders and Legends of the Blindness Field in 2015, joining his son Charles F.F. Campbell, who had been inducted in 2007.

The manuscript was transcribed in England for Sir Francis and traveled back to Detroit with his family after his death in 1914. Mrs. Zelma Campbell sent a "barrel" of Sir Francis Campbell's documents to AFB Librarian Helga Lende in 1936, which seems to have contained the manuscript. AFB President Robert Irwin then borrowed the manuscript upon his 1949 retirement. Irwin is believed to have moved the document from New York to Port Orchard, Washington, to use on a history of work for the blind that he was writing. Unfortunately, Mr. Irwin did not finish the work before he died in 1951. But during that time he had often corresponded and met with the

person who oversaw the records at AFB – none other than Mary Dragna Campbell, second wife of Charles Francis F. Campbell. Interestingly, there were several letters between Mary Campbell, Robert Irwin, and his successor, AFB President Robert Barnett, discussing how useful it would be to turn AFB's old files into a usable archive.

At this point, there are two possible routes the manuscript may have taken. Robert Irwin's documents were mistakenly donated to the Library of Congress by his sister, and the manuscript may have gone to the LC at that time. However, Mary Dragna Campbell had decided to spend her retirement from AFB in Reedsville, Pennsylvania, writing a biography of Sir Francis, and very possibly used the manuscript for her work. She too passed away before she could finish her book. Just before she died, though, she donated the materials from Sir Francis that she was using to the Library of Congress, and the manuscript moved yet again. *Probably*. At no point in time had any of this material been inventoried. So in 1978, when AFB Archivist Marguerite Levine had to track the manuscript down, it was difficult to prove ownership. Marguerite had decided to establish a claim to the records of Robert Irwin thought his legal will, and return them to the AFB Archives where Irwin had originally intended that they go. The Library of Congress seems to have been very helpful in returning the manuscript to the AFB Archive. Mary Campbell's donation to the Library of Congress has been fully inventoried and cataloged there, and the record can be viewed at

[https://findingaids.loc.gov/db/search/xq/searchMferDsc04.xq?
_id=loc.mss.eadmss.ms014078&_faSection=contentsList&_faSubsection=series&_dmdid=d20873e21&_start=1&_lines=125](https://findingaids.loc.gov/db/search/xq/searchMferDsc04.xq?_id=loc.mss.eadmss.ms014078&_faSection=contentsList&_faSubsection=series&_dmdid=d20873e21&_start=1&_lines=125)

It's quite a journey. But the journeys described in the manuscript are just as incredible. Sir Campbell's life and a student and educator are presented in a detailed and personal manner, and his personality is clear in his writing. But beyond getting to know Sir Francis, his descriptions of life in pre-Civil War Tennessee are just as amazing. Campbell traveled through the mountains on horseback to find students for the Tennessee School for the Blind, sometimes basing his searches on little more than rumors heard at the general store. Often, Campbell would have to work for more than just a day to convince parents that letting him send their child off to the school by stagecoach would be a wise idea. Campbell also described a time of incredible stress in college when his stomach pain was unbearable. A doctor gave him medicine that made him sleep for two days. He physically hid Campbell's textbooks while he was sleeping, and prescribed him one biscuit, one cup of beef tea, and three months in the mountains to recover. For this recovery time, Campbell and his companion brought a hatchet and a rifle to a cabin. Campbell felled trees, and his buddy hunted for food, and what I would consider something more akin to "wilderness survival" was to them considered vacation. And finally, Campbell gives absolutely heart wrenching

illustrations of exactly why he was an abolitionist through his own experiences with slavery in the South.

The manuscript returned to New York and was placed in a folder in the AFB Archive for over 40 years, until the materials were moved to the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville, Kentucky in January of 2020. Once I discovered the materials in August of 2021, I unfolded all 60 the pages, laid them flat, and placed them in what I believe to be the intended order. The next steps in the journey will be to transcribe the document from cursive, so it will be fully accessible in the near future. Until that can be done, though, preliminary digitization of the [handwritten document is available at Internet Archive](#), along with photocopies of the [Legal Claim of Ownership of the manuscript](#). I believe the original legal correspondence and documents to be here in the AFB Archive as well and hope to find those as I continue inventory the Archive. The manuscript will be rehoused in an archival folder and box and will hopefully be able to settle into its new home for a while, and enjoy its own physical "retirement." Or maybe it's just gone to the mountains for a while to recover.

Guardians and Pioneers

Baseball has been on my even more than usual this year. It's not just because of the return to an almost-regular season. You see, I was born in Indianapolis and have always been a Cleveland fan, just like my grandfather before me. But I have not felt comfortable wearing an "Indians" hat or shirt - be it the Cleveland Indians or the Indianapolis Indians - since some time in the 1990s. I could not be happier about Cleveland changing the team's name to the Guardians. I'll never forget sitting in the backseat of my Grandfather's car and staring at the winged Guardians of Traffic on the bridge over the Cuyahoga River as a kid. My mom has the same memory from the 1950s. I always loved the mighty, Art Deco style of the 1932 Guardians, and the style carried on to the baseball team's new logo.

It was interesting timing when, just a few days after Cleveland's announcement, I happened to come across a [program for the 1931 World Conference on Work For the Blind](#) in the Archive. Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan were guests of honor that year, and a number of significant publications came out of the Conference. But what really caught my attention was the Art Deco style of the cover. It almost looked like it had been designed by the same person as the statues in Cleveland. It shows what seems to be a guardian angel with large wings that take up a majority of the frame. The angel's hands are outstretched and pointing down to a young woman with her arms upwards. But her back is turned to the angel

behind her, and the angel's eyes are closed. Neither of the subjects can see the other.

Moving along through the AFB Archive, I also came upon a 1983 [press release from the Telephone Pioneers of America](#) about their Beep Baseballs. The "Pioneers" are a volunteer organization made up of current and phone company employees who have, among other things, mass produced beep baseball for players who are blind since 1964. While I had known that the Pioneers had originally used telephone receivers as speakers for the beeping baseball, this press release also showed that they had expanded into other beeping sports, such as bowling and golf. And unlike some of the other early documents I have encountered, this one actually contained two photographic images. One shows a volunteer assembling a beep baseball by hand, with all of the components displayed sitting on a table outside of two softballs that had been cut open. The other captures the moment when a young man has just hit the ball, it's blurry image still just a few inches away from the bat that he has just swung.

As I watch the World Series this October, I'll be thankful. Even though Cleveland won't be playing this year, I will still be thinking about the Guardians and the Pioneers who made baseball special for a lot of people.

From 2011 to 2020, I worked in the M.C. Migel Memorial Library here at APH. "The Migel" had been purchased and transferred from the American Foundation for the Blind in 2009, just before I started here. I probably touched each of the 22,000 items in the collection during that time, and I often collaborated with my counterpart at the Association Valentin Hauy in Paris. We noticed that a large number of the French language books and articles in The Migel were stamped with a seal from "The Association," and often contained cataloging markings consistent with their Library. But we were never quite sure how or when those items crossed the Atlantic and made their way into The Migel. Ten years later, while working my way through the Administration series in the AFB Archive, I finally found an explanation.

AFB Librarian Helga Lende had visited the Valentin Hauy Association in August of 1931. Their librarian, Madame Fouque, wondered if the two organizations' libraries might make an exchange of their duplicate books. But Ms. Lende decided that she would not be able to offer anywhere near as valuable collection in trade. Instead, Lende wrote directly to Pierre Villey,

Secretary General of The Hauy, and asked if AFB might be able to just pay for the duplicates. An agreement was made to pay \$100 for close to 400 books in several languages.

The file contained every detail of the transaction. Lists of every book are included, along with both sides of the correspondence that led to the sale. Even receipts from selling, shipping, and receiving the books are included. After shipping charges were added, the total charged to AFB was \$112. Even though that would be roughly \$2,000 in 2021, it still must have been a bit of a favor to AFB. Just one of the books included was Louis Braille's 1839 "Nouveau Procede pour Representer par des Points la Forme Meme des Lettres," the first book to use contractions in Braille.

The entire collection of correspondence has been uploaded to Internet Archive at https://archive.org/details/image-2_202110

In September of 2021, APH received a handful of Helen Keller artifacts that had been discovered after our initial January 2020 collection move from the American Foundation for the Blind in New York. The inventory that accompanied them, named "Misc. items to APH," contained a vague entry:

Helen Keller items

- Native American feather (part of HK's American Indian clothing?)

In the shipment were two feathers, packed with a note reading "Indian [sic] Head Dress?" But with so little to go on, I wondered if the feathers might just have been orphan objects that someone found sitting around, rather than artifacts from the AFB Helen Keller Archive.

We began to explore the collection. There were several Native American items in the Archive, including a [Native American deerskin dress](#) and two pairs of [moccasins](#). From his work rehousing the Archive, Museum Director Mike Hudson also knew that the collection contained a beaded headband and belt that were not digitized for the catalog. All of these items had been attributed to the Pawnee Nation in Oklahoma. A [certificate](#) and letter in the archive showed that Helen Keller was given an honorary membership to the Pawnee Nation in 1960. But an acceptance speech in the same [folder](#) showed that, in 1939, she had been previously been inducted into the Stoney Nakoda Nation. And finally, the folder contained a hand-written memo that seemed to be an inventory of all of the Native American artifacts in the collection. Thankfully, the two feathers were listed along with the rest

of the artifacts. Part of the mystery had been solved – the feathers did belong in the collection after all. But a search of the Archive had also brought up a [newspaper article](#) showing Helen wearing that “Pawnee” dress, but at a ceremony with the Stoney Nakoda Nation! Further, she was also very clearly wearing one of the feathers in a beaded headband, while being presented with the other.

Searching outside of the catalog brought up a high contrast version of the newsprint photograph that showed that the feathers, dress, headband and belt had all been worn by Helen at the 1939 initiation into the Stoney Nakoda Nation rather than having come from the Pawnee. It was a hard distinction to make at first. The camera flash had changed the appearance of the color of the shiny glass beads on the belt and the headband. But the higher contrast image made it clear. The provenance of these latest artifacts had gone from “Indian Head Dress?” to photo documentation of the artifacts being worn by Helen Keller at the Stoney Nakoda ceremony in 1939. Unfortunately, the origin of the two pairs of moccasins is still a bit of a mystery. Assumptions can continue to be made, but that has clearly caused some misattribution in the past. Further, the two pairs look to be made of slightly different styles, skins, and sizes, and neither of the patterns matches each other or the dress without doubt. But I have the feeling that the answer to the moccasin mystery may yet come out of some further research.

“The blind veterans here in the Helen Keller class are able, thru talking books, to obliterate the tedious hospital hours and at the same time give themselves a literary background. I have been successful in teaching them all grades of braille... A great many, before learning Braille, had mental handicaps but the concentration on Braille seems to have obliterated these.” Sadie Peterson-Delaney, 1938.

Chief Librarian Sadie P. Delaney was an innovator in the use of bibliotherapy at the Veterans Administration Hospital Library in Tuskegee, Alabama. She first practiced this therapeutic use of reading materials with troubled and immigrant children at the Harlem Branch of the New York Public Library. Her program received international recognition, as did her work developing both the first collection of Black history and literature, and the first exhibition of African American Art. But it was her interest in working with patrons of the branch who were blind that inspired her to learn braille and Moon code.

Delaney was then recruited to the Tuskegee VA Hospital Library in 1924, and exponentially increased both the collections and programming at the library. She created a special library department for patrons who were blind in 1935, through which she taught approximately 600 patients to read braille. It is from that moment in time that the documents in the American Foundation

for the Blind Archive come. A letter from Delaney details her new programs for veterans and rural blind patrons. The brief letter, quoted above, sincerely thanks AFB for the assistance they provided with Talking Books and canes.

With the letter to AFB, she enclosed four incredibly personal photographs, each of which is captioned on the rear. The first shows 11 veterans in line outside of the library, waiting to go to their daily class. Most hold canes and braille books. Another photo shows Sara Richardson, 76, on a rural porch with a talking book player, headset, and the white cane that Delaney stated she used to get to church. A third photo shows Maudie Driscoll, 88, also listening to a talking book on a front porch. And finally, Tim and Susie Dillard are shown barefoot, with the country wilderness behind them. The caption reads "This blind couple are very happy" with the talking books that they are listening to on the porch. Sadie Peterson-Delaney can be researched further at the New York Public Library Archives, Tuskegee University Archives, Dutchess County Historical Society, and the Sadie Peterson Delaney African Roots Branch Library.

Entire books have been devoted to quotes by Helen Keller. We are often presented with quotes that are brief, pleasant, and even comforting in nature... something that might appear on an inspirational tea cozy, or in a daily affirmations journal. But Helen Keller was in fact a firebrand and a radical, with plenty of writing to back it up. For Women's History Month, Helen Keller will be speaking to us directly from the pages of some of her most outspoken works. While some of them are over a century old, their relevance lives to this day.

"Economic urgencies have driven women to demand the vote. To a large number of women is entrusted the vitally important public function of training all childhood. Yet it is frequently impossible for teachers to support themselves decently on their wages. What redress have these overworked, underpaid women without the vote?"

"The laws made by men rule the minds as well as the bodies of women."

"Women will be able to protect themselves from man-made laws that are antagonistic to their interests. Some persons like to imagine that man's chivalrous nature will constrain him to act humanely toward woman and

protect her rights... We demand that all women have the right to protect themselves and relieve man of this feudal responsibility."

- from [Why Men Need Woman Suffrage](#), Call, October 17, 1913.

"The attempt to imprison a woman who is teaching the mothers of the working class what they so pitifully need to know is an outrage. It should arouse every one that believes in free speech and in a woman's right to rule her own body. The manner in which Emma Goldman was arrested is a disgrace to the City of New York. The ruffianly search was an insult to her womanhood and to the common womanhood of all of us."

- from [letter in opposition of Emma Goldman's arrest, April 6, 1916.](#)

"Incredible as it seems, employers of others' brains and bodies may, and do, claim a right over their lives, the frail limbs and tender souls of others' progeny, for profit. To such persons, knowledge about birth control is odious."

- from [Birth Control](#), Call, November 26, 1915.

"The time is ripe for us; there are now four million women voters in the United States. The party that turns them down is dead politically. Of course, our victory is not won; we shall have to work long and endure much before our dreams are realized."

- from [The New Woman's Party](#), Call, June 9, 1916.

"You make me feel that I have worked to some purpose by saying I am remembered "whenever hearts are lifted, and people are given a new

vision." But those dear words cause blushes to cover my face. For yours is far the greater achievement. You are among the women I most love because you so labor and suffer that the life of the human race may become safer, finer, and more creative."

- from [correspondence, Margaret Sanger of Planned Parenthood and Helen Keller](#), March 13, 1938.

"Eighty percent of our people live in rented houses, and one-half of the rest are mortgaged. The country is governed for the richest, for the corporations, the bankers, the land speculators, and for the exploiters of labor. Surely we must free men and women together before we can free women."

- from [To an English Woman-Suffragist](#), Manchester Advertiser, March 3, 1911.

Of beautiful Springtimes and unfortunate transcriptions.

"Yes, it is good to be home now with the daffodils and hyacinths, the lawn thick with soft young blades and mating birds. My ear may not catch the chirp of the robin or the note of the bluebird, but somewhere behind the silence bird-songs fill my heart, "As the cactus fills the night with beauty and with fragrance!" I am thankful that In a troubled world no calamity can prevent the return of spring."

So begins Helen Keller's [reply](#) to an Easter greeting from philanthropist Carrie B.F. Fuld. In the 1933 letter, Helen Keller describes her travels through the South, the health of her companions, and even laments the start of the persecution of people who were Jewish in Germany. Unfortunately, if a reader is using the transcription to access the letter rather than the photograph, the message is not as clear. "*Uo**ww and tfee woadftfftO*" it reads. "*a^snea of fal» faacl. and faacIniitaa.*"

As stated on the Helen Keller Online Archive, people who are blind or visually impaired often rely on screen readers to decipher electronic text and make it readable through speech or braille. The program responsible

for generating automated text is called “Optical Character Recognition [OCR.] It is a process by which software reads a page image and translates it into a text file by recognizing the shapes of the letters. OCR software breaks the image down into recognized letters, numbers, and punctuation marks. Letters become words, words become paragraphs, and in the end the printed page has been translated into machine-readable text that you can read, edit, save, and have voiced by a screen reader or other device.

OCR is not perfect, but it is typically the best solution for Transcribing enormous amounts of information – be it at the Helen Keller Archive, or the M.C. Migel Library’s Internet Archive collection. Items that are handwritten, damaged, illustrated, or contain special fonts are sometimes unreadable. But in this case, even a well preserved, typewritten document has clearly presented some issues in OCR transcription. In the case of the Helen Keller Archive, corrected transcriptions can be submitted by hand. Some organizations recruit volunteers to review entire collections of transcribed materials. But with something as large and automated as Internet Archive, corrections are not possible. So while the majority of a book such as Keller’s “The Story of My Life...” may be transcribed rather well by OCR, a reader will still run into problems such as the transcription of a facsimile of a letter from Helen Keller to Phillips Brooks in the book, which begins “JO-IGoitOTI-, WLnAU'TL lit. a tjoil a. Lo-VLTLa Q|tl .”

When the Helen Keller Archives were loaned to APH in 2020, they were accompanied by the equally-important but less-glamorous AFB Company Archives. The AFB Archive contains a complete history of the American Foundation for the Blind in correspondence, photographs, and recordings. The Research series of the Archive has 21 folders with information relating to the development of AFB’s “Foundation Writer” braillewriter. Several of these folders document submissions from inventors of obscure braillewriters that likely never saw production, and are not documented elsewhere. Though some of them might be unknown, names like Framcesconi, Tejedo, Frumkin and Hickey are preserved in history for their unique contributions to the development of the Foundation Writer. An inventor named Hickey even received a response letter from Robert Irwin explaining his dream of a “fireproof” display room at AFB for such experimental submissions – a place where Hickey’s prototype would have an honored spot. Alongside these inventors are folders with the names of organizations that contributed to the development of braillewriters, such as the Braille Institute, Pitman Engineering, Armour Research, and Smith Corona.

Following the individual and organizational folders are 7 more that document the development of the AFB Foundation Braillewriter from 1924 to 1936. In addition to the innumerable pieces of correspondence, it holds original schematics, unique photographs, a collection of positive feedback from early users, and even the original patent document for the Foundation Writer.

The pages and pages of correspondence, be it between individuals or entire companies, really illustrate the huge number of people that had some kind of part in the development and production of this one important braillewriter.

The Foundation Writer was developed by AFB after they discontinued production of the Hall Braillewriter in 1932. AFB contracted Smith -Corona to manufacture the Writer. The machine featured a carriage return and line-space lever, a back space key, and margin stops similar to those found on standard typewriters. The keyboard resembled that of the Hall. Most of the housing and parts were constructed from polished aluminum and stainless steel, giving it a streamlined look inspired by aircraft design. Production ended in 1947 after a total production of around 2,000 machines.

Early in 1943, the American Foundation for the Blind started a program that delivered an important step towards independence to soldiers who had been blinded in World War II. Often the first item a hospitalized GI requested, braille watches were presented to each blinded serviceman referred to AFB by the military or the Veterans Administration. Once a referral was received, the veteran's name, rank, and serial number were engraved on the back of either a pocket or wrist watch, and it was sent to the veteran as quickly as possible. By December of 1945, 1,048 braille watches had been given to blinded WWII soldiers. Five of the watches were even delivered to American soldiers in German POW camps by the YMCA.

After the war, watches continued to be sent to both veterans of WWII, and to peacetime soldiers whose vision had been lost while serving. By 1959, another 87 watches had been given to veterans who had been blinded in the Korean war -14 of which were sent to American POWs in North Korea.

In addition to the presentation of these braille watches, a free watch repair service was also provided. An AFB repairman said that most of the watches that came back for repairs simply had flakes of tobacco

clogging-up the works, since the watches had open faces. One folder in the AFB Archive holds hundreds of repair receipts, each with the veteran's name and address on it. Among the receipts is correspondence between a Pennsylvania caseworker and Katherine Gruber, director of AFB's braille watch program. It discusses the fact that several people had not only lost their vision in the War, but also their hands. Since these veterans could not feel braille, they were provided with a chiming "Repeater" pocket watch with a frame around it to be more easily used by bilateral amputees. Originally manufactured by Tiffany and Co., these chiming watches later had to be imported from Switzerland due to cost - approximately \$1,000 at the time.

AFB's braille watch program was discontinued in 1963. Braille watches had finally become more easily available to veterans through the VA because of Public Law 309, and the expenditure could no longer be justified by AFB. But during those war years, it was crucial that those who needed watches get them immediately, and AFB was able to do just that.

This year's annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists was in Washington DC, which allowed me the chance to make an important visit. I was given a special tour of the Washington National Cathedral to visit Helen Keller's final resting place. My guide began by showing me a sculpture of Helen Keller that was high up on a corbel close to the ceiling in the Cathedral. I have to admit that I was not even aware that the sculpture was there before the tour. It was created as part of the "Great Modern Christians" series, along with other sculptures such as Albert Schweitzer and Pope John XXIII. Created in 1969, it was still considered part of the construction of the Cathedral, which initially lasted from 1909 to 1990. I later learned that in the early 1980s, the Cathedral had a plaster copy of the sculpture made for visitors who were visually impaired to feel. After viewing the sculpture, we went downstairs to the Chapel of St. Joseph of Arimathea. On a wall in the chapel was a bronze plaque dedicated not only to Helen, but also to her teacher. Bearing both raised letters and braille, it states "Helen Keller (1880-1968) and her lifelong companion Anne Sullivan Macy (1866-1936) are interred in the columbarium behind this chapel." The current plaque is from 2019. The plaques have to be replaced fairly often since visitors touch the braille, and the current memorial is much less worn than many of the photos that might be found online. On the opposite wall was mounted a similar plaque for Matthew Shepard, which also included braille. The victim of a 1998 hate crime, Matthew's family insisted that his memorial also include braille, so that anyone visiting Helen could also read his memorial.

The columbarium is normally closed to the public, but I was allowed in for a special tour. Even I, however, could not take photos inside the columbarium. On a small rectangular piece of marble covering the crypt were three names - Anne Sullivan, Helen Keller... and Mary Agnes Thomson. While the information is given on the plaque or even generally found elsewhere, Polly Thomson, Helen's companion of 45 years, is buried along with her friends Anne and Helen. While I was embarrassed that I was not aware of this, my guide asked me if I knew who "Mary" was. It had been a surprise to find all three companions together, but as I would soon find out, it was well documented in the Helen Keller Archive.

Upon my return from Washington, I decided to research exactly how all three companions ended up in the National Cathedral. From what could be found in the Helen Keller Archive, it seems that Helen made the decision, and perhaps quite early in both her life, and in the life of the Cathedral. Helen visited the Cathedral in 1912 and wrote Anne a lengthy [letter](#) about how impressive it was. Helen was even allowed to climb a ladder and feel the ceiling and columns as they dried. After Anne's passing in 1936, another [note](#) states that Helen asked that teacher be placed in the columbarium, and that "...if Helen wants it, she should have it..." Additionally, the note shows that Helen provided an inscription for Anne's urn reading "Blessings upon the receptacle of the precious dust which my heaven-sent teacher wore as a garment as she wrought her miracle of liberation thru Him who is the Lord of Life and Love." While I knew that Anne might have been the first woman laid to rest at the Cathedral, Helen [writes](#) to Bishop Freeman that "It makes me proud to know that Anne Sullivan Macy is the first woman thus to be recognized for her own achievements." Further, Helen seems to have been a [very rare exception](#) to the rules to have been accepted for placement in the columbarium long before her actual passing, since she knew that she wanted to be with Anne. A 1959 copy of Helen Keller's [will](#) further states that Polly had purchased for Helen an identical urn to Anne's so that Helen could be placed alongside Anne when the time came. Polly added to the will that her own wishes were that she be cremated, and that her friends do with her ashes as they see fit. It would seem, then, that a [year later](#), Helen placed Polly in the same crypt as her teacher. Helen joined her friends at the National Cathedral 8 years after that.

When I started working in the AFB Helen Keller Archive in October of 2020, I was incredibly lucky to feel an immediate, personal connection to both the Archive and to my predecessors who spent years building it. It's almost as if my had was being guided when the first box and first folder that I opened up contained correspondence about its first archivist, Marguerite Levine. Marguerite was hired in 1960 by the M.C. Migel Memorial Collection's first librarian, Helga Lende. (Having just moved to the Archive after a decade in the Migel library, Helga was another of my predecessors.)

For a decade, Marguerite scoured the many buildings and departments of AFB for 40 years-worth of backlogged records. She organized a giant, disheveled "nothing" into an incredibly valuable "something" - the AFB company Archive. With correspondence and records from most any individual or organization related to the field of visual impairment from all over the world, this once centralized location spans the entire field.

At the same time, Marguerite discovered and organized the unprocessed materials that would become the Helen Keller Archive. While being interviewed years later, she said "How did I become curator of her papers? For the simple reason that the papers were there."

Marguerite completed the organization of the Archive in 1970. Those ten years made her an expert just in time, as she was needed for two more significant projects. The first was assisting Frances Koestler for over 4 years, researching her definitive work "The Unseen Minority: A Social History of Blindness in the U.S." Almost immediately following that massive undertaking, Marguerite spent two more years working with Joseph P. Lash on his just as definitive book, "Helen and Teacher: The Story of Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan Macy."

Marguerite Levine retired in July of 1985. She passed her responsibilities along to yet another predecessor of mine, Alberta Lonergan. Just like me, Alberta moved to the Archive from the Migel Library, where she had worked since 1965.

The extensive interview conducted with Marguerite Levine, along with other correspondence regarding her 1985 retirement from the position, are available at Internet Archive at <https://archive.org/details/image-61>

In April of 2021, the AFB Helen Keller Archive had its first in-house visitor at APH. Maria Galmarini-Kabala traveled from the College of William and Mary to conduct research for her book on the history of the international blind movement, with a focus on the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. She was very appreciative of the efforts of the APH Museum. With so many records and archives on this subject scattered across the globe, she believed that Louisville was known as the most centralized place to find records spanning the entire field of visual impairment.

During her research, she discovered an intriguing collection of correspondence regarding a survey and report titled The Status of Blind Women in the World." In 1957, Annette Watney was an Assistant Secretary at the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind, a position that Maria said was not a leadership role. She had submitted a questionnaire to the American Foundation for the Blind seeking data for her research report, The Status of Blind Women in the World. She received a response directly from the Director of AFB, Robert Barnett. He found nothing but annoyance at having to answer her irrelevant questions, using the phrases "weak...

worthless... an irritating task borne from a sense of frustration..." He went even further to criticize the project, suggesting that it falsely promoted the idea that women who were blind were somehow more special than men, when in reality, the two were essentially the same.

But even in the face of a perturbed director, Annette did not back down. She politely argues that her research is not meant to discriminate against men, but simply to determine what unique challenges women who are blind might face. She then goes on to thoroughly explain to Director Barnett why this information is important, and how she thinks the research can be used. Further correspondence takes an increasingly kinder tone, until Barnett eventually recognizes that the completed report does have value, while Watney shares her own doubts.

It is important to note that the report was likely the only one of its kind at the time, and that it was still being consulted as of April of 2021. The full set of correspondence, including the report, questionnaire, its responses, has been digitized for Internet Archive at https://archive.org/details/image-11_202104